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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MA](#) [MP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: EAC CONVENED TO REVIEW SECURITY AND
ORDERED DEPARTURE

REF: ANTAN 484

Classified By: RSO R.J. BENT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: On June 30, 2009, the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) convened to discuss the possibility of lifting the Ordered Departure (OD) status for post. The EAC discussed several recent events involving small explosive devices, arrests connected to those events, and the reported throwing of a molotov cocktail at a Malagasy NGO office. The EAC agreed that ground conditions in Antananarivo and greater Madagascar remain safe, and recommended to the Ambassador that he request the lifting of OD status (reftel). END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) The Political Officer reported that while some frustrated "Legalist" (Pro-Ravalomanana) leaders had initially indicated to Embassy officials in June that they were not opposed to use of force as a last resort to achieve their objectives, the same leaders have continued to negotiate with Rajoelina's High Transitional Authority (HAT) and other political movements and have abandoned the violence option. Although Post was concerned about possible violence springing from the June 26th Independence Day flashpoint, the holiday passed peacefully and without any significant incident. A central Legalist leader and organizer of the daily Magro protests publicly reiterated that his movement is peaceful.

¶3. (C) Additionally, the SADC/AU/UN-led negotiations are forecasted to resume later in the week of July 6. The HAT has been strongly encouraged by all outside actors (UN, France, US, etc.) to seriously participate in the negotiations, rather than moving forward with unilateral election plans that would exclude other political movements.

¶4. (S) For an updated snapshot of management and security information regarding the situation in Madagascar, please refer to Post's Intellipedia website:
http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Embassy_Antananarivo_Status_Report

¶5. (SBU) The Defense Attache (DAO) reported that despite rumors of Malagasy troop deployment to Morondava and elsewhere in Madagascar, there is no/no evidence to validate these claims. The security status at Ivato airport remains at status quo - there is one anti-aircraft installation at the site, but it is not manned or necessarily ready for use. The new Force d'Intervention Speciale FIS, headed by Commander Charles Randrianasoavina (previously of CAPCAT and CMNE), has come together into a more unified force. Comprised of about 70 agents from the Army, National Police and Gendarmerie, they now have their own vehicles, are creating a toll-free number for tips, and are working to increase their numbers. Previously, this group had been responsible for some illegal activities for private financial gain, but the organization has seemed to come into its own and -- under pressure from many sides to improve its image -- is adopting a more professional demeanor. Regarding the "Vigimada", DAO reported that they have heard nothing regarding the plan and the RSO concurred that the concept was most likely only empty rhetoric used by the High Transition Authority (HAT) government to show that it is in charge. DAO also reported that previously their contacts had been threatened with reassignment outside Antananarivo because of their contact with DAO, but that these relations have now normalized and are functioning.

¶16. (S/NF) The Regional Affairs Officer (RAO) reported that their contacts at Central Intelligence Service (CIS) no longer report any potential threat to Americans or U.S. interests in Madagascar. Some CIS contacts actually were considered disloyal for interacting with RAO, but now RAO is experiencing increasing success in building their relationships with CIS and feel that they are on an upswing.

¶17. (SBU) The Management Office pointed out that the number of international flights out of Madagascar has recently increased to 42 international flights per week, including two additional weekly flights to Paris and two additional weekly flights to Johannesburg (which now has daily service in both directions). All essential supplies are readily available, including food and fuel.

¶18. (C) The Regional Security Officer (RSO) reviewed information regarding recent attempted explosions in Tana. The first attempt was in mid-June when a small explosive device detonated at Leader Price, Tanjombato, a local French-owned grocery store, causing damage but no injuries. (Tanjombato is a remote suburb little frequented by foreigners.) RSO sources claim that it was most likely a personal vendetta against the owners. The following week, security forces found a undetonated explosive device across from the Jesosy Mamonjy Church on Hydro Carbon Road (near the Magro demonstration area). Last week, police arrested eight people alleged to have been behind the bomb and to be planning a similar attempt on a local pizza chain. All suspects had TIKO group connections, having worked for the business as delivery person, providing security from the Ravolomanana radio station or as a TV engineer working for the same station. Several home-made explosives and bomb-making equipment were alleged to have been found in their possession. Colonel Richard Ravalomanana (no relation to the former president) claimed that the suspects admitted to the crimes and that they had been paid by the former regime in exile. Motives included

the loss of their jobs and that Tana was "too quiet."

¶19. (C) On June 25, a small Malagasy NGO called the Prison Fellowship received a threat (unclear whether it was verbal or written) that their offices would be attacked. Upon searching the premises, two unexploded Molotov cocktails were discovered. No arrests have been made. On June 26, the Malagasy Independence Day, two small devices were reported to have detonated in a dumpster outside Mahamasina Stadium, one after 12:30 and the other soon after. There were no injuries or damage reported. It is rumored that prior to the explosion, a Mazda minibus warned a local garbage picker and her son to stay away from the dumpster. Details concerning the size and composition of the devices are not available, but as the blast did not even damage the dumpster, it could not have been significant in size or capability. In these cases, no deaths or injuries occurred.

¶110. (C) On June 26, Didier Ravoahangiharisa (FJKM Church), the owner of Radio Fahazavana surrendered himself to the CNME on charges of being involved in the recent incidents. He was released that same day as there was no evidence indicating his involvement. RSO is not able to confirm details as they do not have direct contacts with CNME and have to go through the gendarmerie for information and confirmation. No further information has been revealed concerning last week's reported arrest of three Turkish men alleged to be mercenaries. RSO has no indications that any of these incidents indicate a trend.

¶111. (SBU) Near-daily protests continue at the burnt-out former Magro/TIKO distribution center on Ravalomanana's private property. Weekdays, there are about 1,000 attendees, while on Saturdays attendance rises toward 4,000. It is rumored that some of the attendees are former-TIKO employees who have to sign in to the event to receive some sort of wages. Since they started in mid-April, there has been little or no violence. The program consist of speakers, prayers and music. The one exception occurred on June 27, when a few protestors threw rocks at a security force vehicle. After less than five minutes, the protestors ceased and the security forces allowed them to proceed. There has been no security force intervention to prohibit the gatherings, or any other use of force.

¶112. (C) COMMENT: The situation on the ground in Madagascar has improved greatly since the April 30th EAC when the committee recommended to extend OD. At that time the EAC already reported a resumption of calm, but felt that inadequate time had passed since the last violence to justify lifting OD, and recommended another EAC in two weeks. Two week

later, after passing three consecutive potential flashpoints in early May without incident, the EAC recommended lifting OD. Initially, the recommendation was made in mid-March to go to OD out of concern for a potential backlash against Americans due to US condemnation of the coup. In the event, no backlash occurred. Daily life is largely back to normal, with all embassies, businesses, and restaurants operating normally. No other foreign missions besides Germany, the U.S., and the World Bank ever evacuated, and all non-American evacuees were permitted to return in April. Other missions also revised their security warning and returned their security status to pre-crisis levels. Since the week of April 20, when two Malagasy citizens were killed by stray bullets, there have been no serious injuries or violence. Throughout the crisis, no American citizens have been harmed or reported threats against them. Post's biggest security concern is the crime rate, which has been on the rise over the last two years. Overall, a sense of calm has returned to Madagascar. Members of the EAC noted that the local people, including Embassy staff, indicate that they want their lives to go back to normal through the Malagasy value of peaceful resolution through dialogue.

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